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Oxford Archaeology and the Challenges of Going Open Source in Geomatics

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Oxford Archaeology is a Registered British Charity and the largest organization to provide archaeological contract services in Europe, employing nearly 300 people. We are committed to applying open source solutions to our IT needs at all levels on both economic and philosophical grounds, as well as applying similar principles of interoperability and standardisation to the data from our archaeological investigations. However, whilst spatial information is often at the heart of what we do, it is in creating a Spatial Data Infrastructure that we have found our greatest challenges to going open source. Whilst some of these issues are specific to the individual needs of O.A., it is clear to us that the majority of them are shared by all newcomers to FOSS4G.

The paper presented will document both those challenges and our successes and hopefully stimulate an open-minded but lively debate about the barriers which reduce FOSS4G take-up in the enterprise sector. Areas addressed will include standards and integration, platform-dependence, documentation, legacy systems, and fee-based proprietary alternatives. Further to this, we will propose the development of a loose-knit, but pluggable and standardized open source toolkit and manual for spatial data management that gives the uninitiated a clear entrance-point into the emergent world of community-based geoinformatics. We hope that the ensuing discussion will be an opportunity to explore ways of bringing such development aidscloser to reality.

Primary authors : Mr. ISAKSEN, Leif (Oxford Archaeology) ; Mr. PUTTICK, Chris (Oxford Archaeology) ; Ms. COOK, Joanne (Oxford Archaeology)

Co-authors :

Presenter : Mr. ISAKSEN, Leif (Oxford Archaeology) ; Mr. PUTTICK, Chris (Oxford Archaeology) ; Ms. COOK, Joanne (Oxford Archaeology)

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